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ABSTRACT

A lesson plan and supportive materials for an exercise in reading comprehension and cooperative writing are presented. The exercise is based on a story entitled "Testimony," in which a writer expresses feelings about a boxing match. The lesson plan outlines procedures for presentation of the exercise to the class, for the cooperative teams to explore the story using a series of worksheets, and for conclusion and followup of the exercise. Worksheets include vocabulary categorization exercises, an activity analyzing the information presented in sentences, an exercise in putting events into sequence, analysis of fight details, an active-passive voice exercise, and an analysis of the sides taken by witnesses to the event. The story is appended. (MSE)

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TESTIMONY

WRITING COOPERATIVELY



CATESOL L. A. Regional Conference
November 7, 1987

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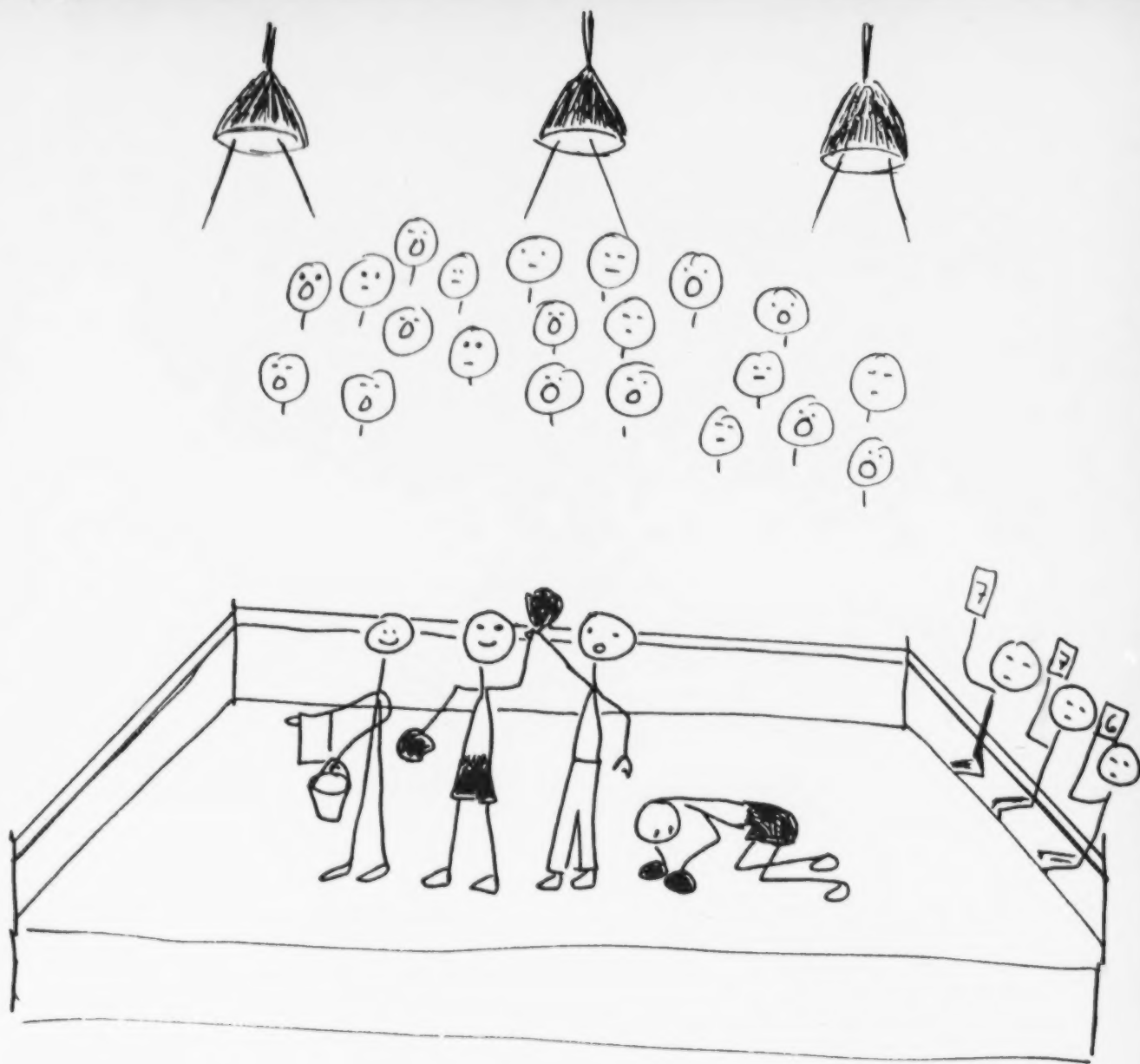
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The Lesson Plan

1. Explain the rationale for "Testimony". Gallico has written that something burned in him: we want to find out what that emotion was. Project the drawing with an overhead projector to assess and/or fill-in class knowledge of boxing. Be sure to determine who can stop the fight, who determines the winner, how boxers are paid, etc. Teams should label the physical elements on their copies of the drawing (for reference as students read the story).
2. Establish a purpose for reading; return to Gallico's purpose for writing the story and discuss what motivates a writer. Expand the idea that words are used to influence our opinions (e.g. ads in magazines, commercials on TV). Use worksheet #1 to introduce the idea of connotation - the emotional association carried by words.
3. Assign the story to be read as homework.
4. Discuss "Testimony" briefly in class. Was Gallico successful; were emotions engaged? Classes vary in comprehension: decide how far to extend this or how much discussion is needed.
5. Worksheets #2 A-D are distributed to cooperative learning teams. While students work, put up sheets of butcher paper headed with the categories. When worksheets are complete, lists are compiled on the butcher paper. Class checks the whole list for accuracy. Many categories overlap: teams should go to the text to determine the correct choice of category here.
6. Worksheet #3 should be divided among the teams; it isn't necessary for each student to complete each sentence. Model this on the board.
7. As the testimony is not presented in sequential order, worksheet #4 helps students understand the progression of the fight (Thompson's actions are inferred from the testimony of the witnesses).
8. The violence and brutality of the story is conveyed through its vocabulary. Worksheet #5 selects out the violence done to Thompson. After completion, this works well as a grammar exercise in passive sentence construction (e.g., his eyelid was cut; his eye wasn't stitched).
9. Worksheet #6 prepares the students to write stories of their own based on the model of "Testimony". Preteach the specialized vocabulary for this exercise: animate, inanimate, biased, impartial. Part 1 is simple and can be

done orally; part 2 should be done by each team (it is much more difficult). The class should reach consensus on the classification of witnesses as biased or impartial.

10. Students are ready to construct a team story from "Testimony". Teams choose one from an array of dramatic photographs. When teams have chosen photographs, they construct a fact paragraph for the photo. This should follow the newspaper lead sentence pattern and be at least three sentences long.

11. Following this, team members should brainstorm to create a list of potential witnesses. Students should be able to list at least twelve (of these, at least 5 should be animate). Each team member selects one animate and one inanimate witness from the list; the team should agree on whether each witness is biased or impartial before writing begins. Each team member writes testimony from the assigned witnesses.

12. Teams presents their photographs to the class; spokespersons read the factual paragraph, and each writer reads his/her own testimony from the witnesses. Post these around the classroom so all may be read again.

13. Follow-up by assigning students to locate a photo in a newspaper or magazine and repeat this last step.

Testimony # 1 - Connotation

Each one of these words carries an emotional association. Use your dictionary to decide if the association is negative or positive. A neutral synonym has been listed for you. Be sure you can explain how you have decided.

antique
advertise
lust
stroll

babyish
gobble
flaunt
taste

decrepit
frail
rickety
donate

waste
innovative
sneak
wish

POSITIVE

NEUTRAL

NEGATIVE

show

eat

old

spend

walk

want

weak

young

Testimony #2 - Vocabulary Categories A

Vocabulary tells us about the setting and characters in "Testimony". Use a dictionary to put these words into the four categories below.

pugilist	dinge	angry	belly
boxing match	stain	finish	lacerate
bout	corner	push	sore
slit	white boy	tough	quivering
lightweight boxer	morphine injection		recovered
cut	yellow bastard		

BOXING

RACE/ETHNICITY/CHARACTER

VIOLENCE/PAIN/INJURY

MEDICAL/BODY

Testimony #2 - Vocabulary Categories B

Vocabulary tells us about the setting and characters in "Testimony". Use a dictionary to put these words into the four categories below.

opponent	doc	cheap	ring rope
(the) second	beating	nurse	guts
stitch his eye	floored	spectator	water bottle
go down	hurt	hit	lousy nigger
gloves	colored boy	shaking	collapsed

BOXING

RACE/ETHNICITY/CHARACTER

VIOLENCE/PAIN/INJURY

MEDICAL/BODY

Testimony #2 - Vocabulary Categories C

Vocabulary tells us about the setting and characters in "Testimony". Use a dictionary to put these words into the four categories below.

round	referee	emergency ward	black
rosin powder	swell up	colored	ambulance
nose	fall down	yellow	Boogie
judge	stay the limit	get crowned	trembling
sweaty	broken	busted	hospital
canvas of the ring floor			

BOXING

RACE/ETHNICITY/CHARACTER

VIOLENCE/PAIN/INJURY

MEDICAL/BODY

Testimony #2 - Vocabulary Categories D

Vocabulary tells us about the setting and characters in "Testimony". Use a dictionary to put these words into the four categories below.

promoter	orderly	bum	hit the deck
fighter	Give it to him!	escape	suckers
drunk	press up against	hit low	intern
unconscious	pounded	sawdust	manager
ring lights	crowd	crashed	shuddered

BOXING

RACE/ETHNICITY/CHARACTER

VIOLENCE/PAIN/INJURY

MEDICAL/BODY

Testimony #3 - Newspaper Leads.

The facts of "Testimony" are written in newspaper style. For each sentence find the who, what, when, where, why, or how. Every sentence does not have all these parts.

Example:

Las Vegas, Nev. - Thomas Hearn wrote boxing history in smashing fashion Thursday night and Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Sugar Ray Leonard watched him do it.

1. William Thompson, 26, colored, a pugilist, died at 5:25 this morning at the Hospital of the Sacred Heart from the effects of a severe beating received in a boxing match with Sammy Pellegrino, white, a lightweight boxer, at the Commonwealth Athletic Club last night.
2. Thompson was floored many times during the bout, and collapsed in his corner at the finish.
3. He recovered in the dressing-room sufficiently to leave for his home, 491 East 141st Street.
4. He was found lying unconscious in the street at 4 a.m. this morning by Patrolman Moynham and taken to Sacred Heart.
5. His opponent is being held for questioning.

Testimony #4 - Sequence

Fill in this chart to show what Thompson did or said before, during, and after the fight.

Before the fight:

During the fight

3rd round -

4th round -

5th round -

6th round -

8th round -

After the fight:

Testimony #5 - Rough stuff

"Testimony" contains many details of the fight between Thompson and Pellegrino. Complete this list to show what happened to Thompson during the fight.

head:

jaw:

hands:

nose:

eyes:

neck:

back:

eyelid:

mouth:

belly/guts:

face:

Testimony - Active to Passive

1. Someone crowned him in an alley.
2. The fight broke his hands.
3. The ring rope lacerated the boxers' backs.
4. Thompson used a shirt to wipe his face.
5. Pellegrino's glove cut Thompson's eyelid.
6. The promoter paid the boxers and the managers.
7. Pellegrino's left hand pounded Thompson's neck.
8. The floor dusted his face with rosin powder.
9. Thompson told his wife he would stay the limit.
10. His manager paid him for each round.
11. The policeman called an ambulance.
12. The nurse quieted the injured boxer.
13. The doctor gave him a morphine injection for the pain.
14. Pellegrino won the fight.
15. The orderly called the doctor.
16. Thompson buried his face in the pillow.

Testimony #6 - Biased Witnesses

Testimony is the report given by witnesses to an event. Usually, witnesses are able to speak. In Gallico's story, testimony is given by inanimate objects as well as people.

1. Divide the following list of witnesses into two categories: animate and inanimate.
2. Look at the animate category carefully. Using the information given in the story, decide if each witness is biased (positively or negatively) or impartial. Quote key words which helped you reach your answer.

USE SEPARATE SHEETS OF NOTEBOOK PAPER FOR 1 AND 2.

Thompson's Second
Thompson's Gloves
The Ring Rope
The Referee's Shirt
Pellegrino's Left Hand
Thompson's Son
Pellegrino
A Judge
The Ring Lights
A Small Box of Sawdust
A Boxing Writer
Patrolman Moynihan
The Reporter
The Office Boy
Thompson's Pillow

The Water Bottle
A Spectator
The Referee
Thompson's Wife
A Telegraph Instrument
The Canvas of the Ring Floor
Pellegrino's Right Hand
The Promoter
The Crowd
Thompson's Manager
A Flagstone
The Intern
The Nurse
The Hospital Orderly
Thompson's God

Paul Gallico
Confessions of a
Story Writer

Testimony

LIBERTY • JANUARY 4, 1930

Why does a guy write a story? Is it for fame, or for money with which to eat, or because it is fun, or because he must, and which comes first, the chicken or the egg?

All of those elements are present and something more which I find difficult to describe but which I have tried to indicate with the title of this final part. The stars are indeed distant, and still one tries to reach them. It is a kind of compulsion that one fears as well as loves. To try is to be alive and, for a moment, more than a man. The price for those moments is disappointment, and one never gets used to the bitterness of the bill when it is presented.

It is good to have a story remembered, loved, quoted, it is good to sell and be successful, but none of these things makes up for the pain of failure along the road from the beginning to the end of a piece of creative writing. For there are two kinds of successes, the one that is sufficiently apparent to meet the eye, and the inward one the writer knows he never has achieved and never can. And yet there is always a next time to lure him on. He has hardly extricated himself from the debris of his last crash when he is already seeking the wings with which to attempt the next flight.

I never knew a writer who was not at bottom a miserable man, for no matter what his achievements, he and he alone knows how far he has missed the target, the awful gulf between what was in his mind and heart when he began and what is left of it when it has been committed to paper. One thing there is that leavens this misery, and that is the joy of striving, the reaching for the firmament. And in this he is happier than many of his fellow men, for this wonderful and exciting joy he may taste again and again until the day he dies.

Stories differ greatly, and sometimes from their very nature or the central theme, in the amount of striving or emotion that goes into them. But whether important or unimportant in conception, the aim

is to do right by the idea and to come as close to perfection as possible. A man who sits down to his typewriter or desk saying: "I will now write me a piece of literature, a classic that will be remembered long after I am gone," is a fool and no writer. But one can and does hope that, somehow, certain stories upon which one embarks will achieve that second kind of success—namely, the inner satisfaction that comes with getting some part of one's innermost feelings to paper; one hopes that it will give relief and expression to pent-up songs, joys and regrets, old sadnesses, beauties discovered.

In "Testimony," and the other stories included in this final part, the striving was present, or rather let us call it an emotion. Something burned, something wanted to get itself written and gave me no rest until I tried it. None of these stories gave me true satisfaction or happiness when they were done, but all of them furnished me with great joy and excitement in the doing. No writer of tales can hope for more.

I was wrong about "McKabe" being the first story I ever sold to a so-called "slick" or big-market magazine. It was the first piece with which I cracked the difficult SATURDAY EVENING POST. But "Testimony," written late in 1929 and printed in LIBERTY, founded and then owned and published by Captain J. M. Patterson, likewise publisher of the DAILY NEWS, preceded it by several years.

It was a kind of trial flight. Busy with establishing myself as a sports editor and columnist, promoting amateur sports extravaganzas such as the Golden Gloves, Silver Skates, Water Circus, and so on, I had not written for more than five years. But I had never lost the desire and the ambition to become a fiction writer.

It needed a burning to start me, something I felt so strongly that there was no help for it but to try to write it. The lot of the Negro prizefighter provided that flame. Year after year, in rotten, filthy little fight clubs, I saw him jeered and hooted, cheated and brutalized. It was not until 1930 or so that the Negro began to achieve standing in the prize ring. In my early days he was rarely allowed to win. His function was to act as a foil and play the part of a battered and bloody buffoon to entertain the white lovers of the sweet science on fight nights. Out of these injustices grew the idea for the story.

I was afraid to tackle a full-length story. Unwittingly, and out of this buck fever, I chose the most difficult medium, the "short short," which

is confined to a single page in a modern magazine. And then because I found myself in great trouble trying to pack the things I had to say and the story itself into so small a space, I had to invent a form in which to tell it. Out of this grew the title—"Testimony."

TESTIMONY

THE FACT: William Thompson, 26, colored, a pugilist, died at 5.25 this morning at the Hospital of the Sacred Heart from the effects of a severe beating received in a boxing match with Sammy Pellegrino, white, a lightweight boxer, at the Commonwealth Athletic Club last night. Thompson was floored many times during the bout, and collapsed in his corner at the finish. He recovered in the dressing-room sufficiently to leave for his home, 491 East 141st Street. He was found lying unconscious in the street at 4 a.m. this morning by Patrolman Moynham and taken to Sacred Heart. His opponent is being held for questioning.

THE TESTIMONY:

HIS SECOND: The Boogie was yellow like all boogies. He wasn't hurt or I'd 'a' stopped it. I always stop it if we're getting hurt. You can't hurt them boogies around the head. He was goin' down without bein' hit, the yellow bastard. He musta got crowned in an alley after I left him. He was all right.

THE WATER BOTTLE: In the third round he set his teeth around my neck and sucked at me. His jaw was trembling.

HIS GLOVES: His hands inside of me were sweaty and broken. One of them swelled up so that it stretched at a seam. They were hot.

A SPECTATOR: Yeah, he fell down right where I was sitting once. His head hit the deck so hard I thought he'd busted it—the deck, I mean. You can't hurt a nigger's head. I seen his eyes roll.

THE RING ROPE: In the sixth round he must have been trying to escape. I felt his back pressed up against me. It was black, shiny, and quivering. I lacerated it.

THE REFEREE: Nahl He wasn't hurt. You can't hurt them dinges. I was watching close. I was gonna stop it once, but he give me the all right. He was stalling.

THE REFEREE'S SHIRT: In the fourth round he used me for a towel. When he was done, I had a red spot. His eyelid was cut. My wearer grew angry and pushed him.

HIS WIFE: He tol' me he would stay the limit because we need the money. He only get paid how long he stayed.

HIS OPPONENT'S LEFT HAND: I drove into his mouth until I was sore. When I got his eye cut, I kept at it and slit it wider and wider until he could no longer see.

A TELEGRAPH INSTRUMENT: He leaned out over me a moment. Two red drops fell on me. My operator said: "Hey, take him over on the other side!" and wiped me with a piece of copy paper.

HIS SON: Papa always brought me something.

THE CANVAS OF THE RING FLOOR: He lay on me seven times. The last time he pressed his mouth against me and left a stain. I dusted his face with white rosin powder, and when he got up everybody laughed. Sometimes when he fell to me I could feel him shaking.

HIS OPPONENT: He hit me low a couple of times. He was tough so I give it to him good. In the fifth he says: "White boy, lemme stay." I says: "Come on and fight, you lousy nigger!" and give it to him.

HIS OPPONENT'S RIGHT HAND: When I crashed into his jaw he flew from the end of me to the floor, where he rolled over. Once his nose went soft to my touch, and when he came in close, I pounded his neck until he shuddered. His belly was softest, and when I dug into it his mouth flew open.

A JUDGE: It should have been stopped.

THE PROMOTER: I certainly hope they don't close my club just on account of a dinge.

THE RING LIGHTS: Once, flat on his back, he stared up at me and into me with eyes that showed only white and saw nothing.

THE CROWD: Give it to him! Down below! Downstairs! Never mind his head! Give it to him in the guts! He don't like it there. Another one. That's it! That's it! He won't take many more of those. . . .

A SMALL BOX OF SAWDUST IN A CORNER: Once he fell near me and stopped with his head at my side. He looked at me and said: "Oh, God, I got to get up! I got to . . ."

HIS MANAGER: Sure he was all right. He says to me after the fight: "I'm all right, Mr. Levy. Gimme my money, I want to go home." So I give him forty dollars, his half, and he beat it. He was all right. If he wasn't feelin' good he shouldn't of been so cheap and should of taken a taxi. . . .

A BOXING WRITER: "Sammy Pellegrino of the East Side, 135½,

Testimony

beat William Thompson of Harlem, 132, in the first eight. The colored boy was down eight times. How long are they going to feed Sammy suckers?"

A FLAGSTONE AT LENOX AVENUE AND 139TH STREET: He fell forward on his face on me. He said: "I can't go no farther. I can't get up again." Then he lay still.

PATROLMAN MOYNIHAN: Yeah, I thought he was drunk first till I rolled him over and seen his face. He says: "Don't hit me no more. I can't get up." Then I called the ambulance.

THE INTERN: Sure, I could tell right away he wasn't going to live. Wasn't much use undressing him and wasting a bed.

THE REPORTER: Say, we had a tip you had some fighter or something brought in here. . . . Oh, a nigger? Yeah, just a bum! O. K. What's the cop's name? Thanks.

THE NURSE: He asked me what happened. I did not know. Then he asked me whether he had gone the route. I did not know what he meant. Then he said that he could get up again, but that he was all hurt. I tried to quiet him. Then he asked me how much money he had. I told him, and he said that it was for his wife. The doctor gave him a morphine injection, but said there was no use stitching his eye or doing anything else. I tried to make him more comfortable. . . .

THE OFFICE BOY: Yes, ma'am, the fight's been over a couple hours. You say your husband ain't home yet? No, ma'am, we don't know nuthin'. No, ma'am, Pellegrino won. No, ma'am—decision.

THE HOSPITAL ORDERLY: Say, I think that guy in twenty-eight is out. Better call the doc.

HIS PILLOW IN THE EMERGENCY WARD, SACRED HEART HOSPITAL: He turned and buried his face in me. He said a prayer. It was: "O God, O Father, let me come to You. Let me walk with You. I can't go no farther alone." Then he said no more.

HIS GOD: One of my children has come unto Me.